Exploring the Free Learning Policy: Analysis of National Assessment Implementation Strategies in Elementary Schools

Risky Dwiprabowo*

* Pascasarjana**,** Pendidikan Dasar, Universitas Negeri Jakarta
* Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, STKIP Kusuma Negara
risky@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

Arita Marini**

** Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Jakarta
aritamarini@unj.ac.id

Linda Zakiah***

** Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Jakarta
lindazakiah@unj.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The need for strategies and understanding of the implementation of the National Assessment program in elementary schools, especially in elementary schools. Problems include a suboptimal understanding of the objectives and methods of assessment, the readiness of schools to adopt this program, and challenges in ensuring that the assessments carried out can provide an accurate picture of students' literacy and numeracy skills. The purpose of this study is to find out the strategy for the implementation of the national assessment at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach that will provide an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the research. The data collection techniques in this study are observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis carried out is through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results showed a significant improvement in literacy and numeracy skills, with the most significant improvement in the ability to interpret and understand the content of the text as well as in the geometry domain and reasoning ability. This shows that the strategy of active student involvement in learning has had a positive impact on improving students' literacy and numeracy skills. The conclusion of this study was obtained, through the application of strategies that encourage proactive student involvement in the learning process, has been proven to be effective in improving literacy and numeracy skills, which are key elements in the National Assessment program. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of developing effective learning strategies, as well as the need to implement the right approach in developing learning strategies to support the achievement of national assessments in primary schools.
Keywords: Keywords consist of two to five relevant words/phrases seperated with semicolon

ABSTRAK
kebutuhan akan strategi dan pemahaman tentang implementasi program Asesmen Nasional di sekolah dasar, khususnya di sekolah dasar. Permasalahan meliputi pemahaman yang belum optimal terhadap tujuan dan metode asesmen, kesiapan sekolah dalam mengadopsi program ini, serta tantangan dalam memastikan bahwa asesmen yang dilakukan dapat memberikan gambaran yang

akurat tentang kemampuan literasi dan numerasi siswa. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk yaitu untuk mengetahui startegi pelaksanaan asesmen nasional di SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi yang akan memberikan analisi mendalam mengenai keterlaksanaan penelitian. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah pengamatan, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data yang dilakukan yaitu melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada kemampuan literasi dan numerasi, dengan peningkatan paling signifikan pada kemampuan menginterpretasi dan memahami isi teks serta pada domain geometri dan kemampuan menalar. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi keterlibatan siswa secara aktif dalam pembelajaran telah memberikan dampak positif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan literasi dan numerasi siswa. Simpulan penelitian ini diperoleh, melalui penerapan strategi yang mendorong keterlibatan siswa secara proaktif dalam proses pembelajaran telah terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan literasi dan numerasi, yang merupakan elemen kunci dalam program Asesmen Nasional. Implikasi temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya mengembangkan strategi pembelajaran yang efektif, serta perlunya penerapan pendekatan yang tepat dalam menyusun strategi pembelajaran guna mendukung pencapaian pelaksanaan asesmen nasional di sekolah dasar.
Kata Kunci: Asesmen Nasional; Literasi; Numerasi; Sekolah Dasar

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is one of the crucial components in educational institutions. The curriculum functions as a learning tool that regulates learning activity plans to facilitate the process of acquiring knowledge and experience through a series of learning activities (Rachman et al., 2021; Sumarsih et al., 2022). Other opinions defined Suratno et al. (2022) Curriculum is a process that includes the determination of learning objectives based on various aspects such as needs, learning materials and methods, development of learning materials and activities, and evaluation of learning outcomes that take into account the characteristics of students.

The development of technology and information affects the direction of education as a means of contributing to improving the quality of human resources, and also affects the development of thinking as well as education policies. According to Indarta et al. (2022); Rahayu et al. (2022) Curriculum changes are expected to be transformed in the field of education that emphasizes more on character development and soft skills based on competencies. The independent curriculum is a new policy that is currently in effect in Indonesia. Freedom of learning is the result of various challenges faced in the world of education, especially those related to human resources (Yamin et al., 2020). The essence of the independent learning policy is to return control over education to schools and local governments by providing flexibility in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs (Kemendikbud, 2023). In many countries, education reforms often focus on curriculum changes (Park & Sung, 2013). However, these reforms often reduce teacher autonomy in most developed countries (Erss, 2018).

The concept of freedom of learning, according to Paulo Freire and rooted in Dewey's idea of democracy in education, offers an educational model that frees students to be creative, innovative, and critical (van der Ploeg, 2016). Under this paradigm, schools are considered learning facilitators who must protect their environment from external distractions (Roohi et al., 2022). The learning process is seen as a means to not only transfer information and knowledge, but also to develop students' intellect, critical thinking skills, and creativity (Broome, 2013; Nilson et al., 2013). Differing opinions Lomotey (2021) defines the Freedom of Learning policy focusing on the concept of freedom of thought, where teachers act as

regulators in the learning process. This perspective provides a wider space for teachers to develop skills and freedom in managing learning, considering that each teacher faces different challenges with diverse students (Akçay & Üzüm, 2016; Ozer, 2013). This drive leads to the exploration of knowledge by students, which in turn forms an independent character (Vhalery et al., 2022). Teachers now have the freedom to interpret the curriculum and are even encouraged to act as co-initiators in curriculum formation (Kemendikbud, 2023).

This curriculum reform has a major impact on the development of students and teachers, so its implementation must be carried out carefully to ensure the expected improvement (Tikkanen et al., 2020; Yuen et al., 2012). The quality and success of a curriculum reform is greatly influenced by teachers' commitment and confidence in these innovations (Priestley & Philippou, 2018). One of the Merdeka Learning policies is the implementation of National Assessment at the school level, including elementary schools. The national assessment aims to encourage schools to make improvements in learning. This includes improving classroom interactions, teacher-student interactions, and teacher competency development (Ramadiana et al., 2024). According to Sudianto dan Kisno (2021) The Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) as part of the National Assessment (AN) is a national-scale education evaluation program that was launched as a replacement for the National Examination (UN) in Indonesia.

Various reactions emerged from education units, especially teachers or educators when information about the Minimum Competency Assessment was circulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemdikbud) since the end of 2019 (Shara et al., 2020). On the other hand, there are still many teachers who equate the National Assessment with the National Examination, thus causing misconceptions about the substance of the two (Widya Ningsih et al., 2021). The Minimum Competency Assessment focuses on two aspects of basic competencies, namely reading literacy and numeracy literacy and is no longer just an understanding and achievement in the curriculum or subjects (Muta'ali, 2020). In addition, the results of the study Widya Ningsih et al. (2021) There are also those who think that the National Assessment adapts the type and form of PISA (Program for International Students Assessment) questions, which is a program that assesses students' abilities on an international scale. When associated with the achievements of Indonesian students in the results of PISA 2018, Indonesia occupies the bottom 10 positions compared to the average achievement of 79 countries that participated in the assessment.

The form of follow-up to the implementation of the independent curriculum policy, namely the national assessment program, requires a strategy that can facilitate the success of the program. In the context of education, strategy refers to plans or measures that are systematically designed to achieve specific educational goals. According to Hattie (2009) Strategies in this context include various approaches, methods, and actions selected and implemented by educators or education managers to improve the quality of learning, achieve desired learning outcomes, and support holistic student development. Other opinions defined Wiggins (2009) Educational strategies can include a variety of things, including the use of technology in learning, project-based learning, the use of active learning methods, the development of relevant curriculums, teacher training, student coaching, and effective classroom management, as well as a variety of other approaches that can support the achievement of educational goals. The research provides important information about strategies that can be used by schools, as a new way to improve national assessment results.

This research can provide an overview that can be used as a comparison of the implementation of the National Assessment at the elementary school level, in addition to providing input for other schools and education policy makers in improving the implementation of the National Assessment program in all elementary schools in Indonesia. Based on these needs and background, the purpose of this study will describe the implementation of the national assessment at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi.

METHODS

Type and Design

This study adopts a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The qualitative approach in this study focuses on an inductive process that refers to the direct and objective experience of participants with the phenomenon being investigated (Kaharuddin, 2021; Wijaya, 2018). According to Creswell (2013) A phenomenological research aims to describe the general meaning for individuals about a concept or phenomenon from their life experiences. In addition, according to (Smith & Osborn, 2007) the phenomenological approach aims to gain a deep understanding of the participants' life experiences and explore the meanings contained in the phenomena being studied. The subjects of this study include the principal and 2 5th grade teachers at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi Jakarta.

Data and Data Sources

The data collected in this study consists of: a) Primary data, namely information obtained directly from original sources through data collection procedures and techniques. The researcher obtained primary data through interviews, observations, and documentation. b) Secondary data, i.e. information obtained from indirect sources, often in the form of official documents and archives.

Hardani (2020) stated that the main data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, while additional data such as documents can also be used. Researchers collected data through the interview method. The purpose of data collection in qualitative research is to obtain as much information as possible. The resource persons in this study are related to the implementation of the national assessment, including teachers and students of grade V, as well as the Principal at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi.

Data collection technique

The data collection technique used in this study, namely data is collected in a structured manner using three main techniques: observation, interview, and documentation, with the aim of deepening a comprehensive understanding of the national assessment implementation strategy in elementary schools. Observation is used to directly monitor the interaction and atmosphere in the school environment, providing an actual understanding of the implementation of teaching and learning. This approach is essential to understand practical details in education that may be overlooked by other methods. An interview is defined as an interaction between two people on a given occasion, where one acts as the interviewer and the other as the interviewee (Alhabsyi, 2022). Document analysis (also called document review) is one of the most commonly used methods in research (Dalglish et al., 2021). In this study, the

analysis of the documents used is the results of the national assessment at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi Jakarta in 2022 and 2023.

Data Analysis

In ensuring the validity of the data, the researcher uses four data validation activities in qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In presenting the data, the researcher prepares a presentation in a structured manner so that the collected data is easy to understand and facilitates the process of drawing conclusions. Data verification involves drawing conclusions based on the data that has been processed, and the formulation of conclusions depends on a framework that has been formulated by previous researchers.

1. Credibility

This activity emphasizes the accuracy and reliability of the data collected in the research. To ensure credibility, researchers ensure that the data collection methods used are appropriate, objective, and reliable. In this study, researchers verified the accuracy of the data collected through direct observation in elementary schools, interviews with teachers, and analysis of official documents.

2. Transferability

This activity highlights the ability to transfer research results to other contexts or similar situations. In this study, transferability includes the ability to apply findings and recommendations on national assessment implementation strategies in primary schools to other primary schools or even to higher levels of education.

3. Dependability

The focus of this activity is on the consistency and stability of data throughout the study. This means that the data is trustworthy and reliable over time. In this study, the researcher ensured that the data collection method used produced consistent and reliable results.

4. Confirmability

This activity is related to the objectivity of the data and the ability to ensure that research is not influenced by the opinions or biases of the researcher. Researchers reflect on their personal position and influence in the research, as well as use objective procedures in data collection and analysis to ensure that the results of the research can be verified by others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis show that SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi uses various strategies to carry out the National Assessment in accordance with the principles of Freedom of Learning. This analysis was obtained from the results of interviews with the principal and teachers of class V, the monitoring of the learning process and the analysis of documents from the national assessment at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi.

Increased student engagement

Increased student engagement can be achieved through a variety of strategies designed to encourage active participation, motivation, and student engagement in the learning process. Here are some ways that can be done to increase student engagement in the following image:
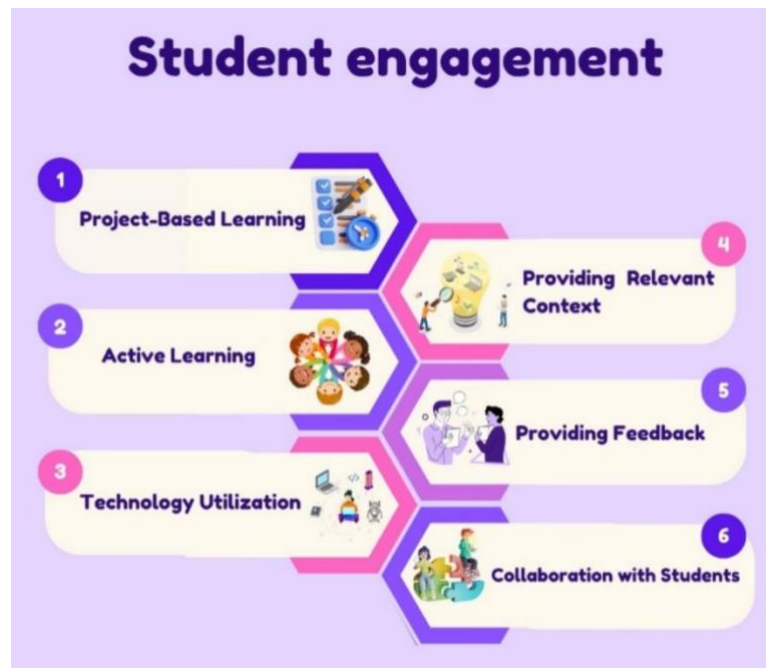
Figure 1. Student Engagement Strategies

The findings of this study are in line with the terroi who said student engagement has received special attention from academic researchers as an important source for reducing boredom, dropout rates and improving achievement rates (Fredricks, 2011). In addition, the involvement is important in the academic and intellectual development of students and improves student performance (Dassanayake & Senevirathne, 2019; Sun & Rueda, 2012). A sense of involvement encourages students to actively participate in the classroom, which ultimately leads to better academic and social outcomesk (Siddiqi, 2019). Students engage in an assignment when they experience it as very exciting, find it challenging, and consider themselves to be very skilled at achieving it, that is, the situation is an optimal learning moment (Schneider et al., 2016). The following is a documentation of the student learning process in the classroom.

Figure 2. Student Learning Process

In Figure 2, the learning process of teachers implements problem-based learning where students are involved in real problems or tasks that require creativity and collaboration in planning and developing problem-solving strategies. Through this problem-based learning, students will feel more engaged because they have the freedom to explore ideas in planning

problem-solving strategies. In addition, students actively engage students, such as group discussions, simulations, role-playing games, and practical experiments. This way, students will be more involved in the learning process because they are directly involved in the learning activities. The use of technology in learning can create an interesting and interactive learning experience for students. The findings show that teachers use media and various representations to support students' needs in learning. The findings are in line with previous research that found that there was a significant relationship between cognitive engagement, affective engagement, behavioral engagement, and math achievement (Maamin et al., 2022).

Teachers provide learning with real-life contexts and actual problems that are relevant to students' lives. By presenting learning materials in relevant contexts, students will feel more engaged and motivated to learn because they can see a direct connection between learning and their daily lives. In addition, teachers provide constructive and positive feedback to students about their performance and achievements. Motivating and supportive feedback will help increase students' confidence and motivation to engage in the learning process further. These findings are in line with previous research that states that students are involved in the decision-making process and learning planning by asking for their input and opinions on what they find effective and interesting in learning (Martins & Carvalho, 2018). The results of the study show that student expectations and engagement have an important seeding role in student engagement. Affective engagement is the most important determinant of an institution's reputation, well-being, and transformative learning. Behavioral involvement determines self-efficacy and self-esteem. Cognitive and social involvement is necessary but not enough conditions for student success (Bowden et al., 2021).

Results of National Assessment

The National Assessment Exam (AN) is given to grade V students who are randomly selected by the Ministry of Education, in this study the analysis is carried out on the results of the AN indicators of Literacy and Numeracy Ability. Literacy ability indicators are in the form of the results of the percentage of students based on their ability to understand, use, reflect, and evaluate various types of texts (informational texts and fictional texts).

Table 1. Average Literacy Ability Results (Education Report SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi)

No.	Literacy Ability Competencies	Report Card Score 2022	Report Card Score 2023	Improved Presentation
1.	Reading informational text	60,83	67,28	10,60%
2.	Reading sasatra texts	62,68	77,32	23,36%
3.	Access and find the content of the text	70,61	76,51	8,36%
4.	Interpret and understand the content of the text	55,43	72,17	30,20%
5.	Evaluate and mirror text content	56,93	63,99	12,40%
	Score Total	**83,33%**	**96,67%**	**16,01%**

Based on Table 1. the literacy ability of SD Negeri Baru 02 Morning has increased by 16.01%. The literacy competence with the highest score in accessing and finding the content of the text, and which has experienced a significant increase in interpreting and understanding the content of the text, which is the competence of students in the ability to compare and contract ideas or information in or out of texts, make conclusions, group, and combine ideas and information in texts or between informational (non-fiction) and literary texts. The AN result in numeracy ability is the percentage of students based on their ability to think using concepts, procedures, facts and mathematical tools to solve daily problems in various types of relevant contexts that include the domain of numbers, algebra, geometry, data and uncertainty, knowing, applying and reasoning. The following are the results of AN on the numeracy ability of SD Negeri Baru 02 Morning in Table 2.

Table 2. Average Results of Numeracy Ability (Education Report SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi)

No.	Competency of Numeracy Ability	Report Card Score 2022	Report Card Score 2023	Improved Presentation
1.	Domain of Numbers	41,09	49,54	20,56%
2.	Algebra Domain	53,94	38,88	38,73%
3.	Domain Geometri	37,72	54,16	43,58%
4.	The Domain of Data and Uncertainty	49,26	56,77	15,25%
5.	Know	47,94	57,03	18,96%
6.	Apply	40,96	55,68	35,94%
7.	Menas	33,61	48,99	45,76%
	Score Total	**53,33%**	**86,67%**	**62,52%**

The numeracy ability of SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi students has increased by 62.52%, a significant increase in the geometry domain which is the competence of students in thinking using concepts, procedures, facts, and mathematical tools in geometry content to solve daily problems. Another significant improvement in the reasoning domain is the competency of learners on the ability to analyze data and information, make conclusions, and expand understanding in new situations, including previously unknown situations or more complex contexts. In addition, in the domain of applying which is the competence of students on the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of facts, relationships, processes, concepts, procedures, and methods to the content of numbers in the context of real situations to solve problems or answer questions.

The findings of the improvement of the national assessment on literacy and numeracy skills at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi are the success of the strategies implemented by schools and teachers whose implications on a national scale are as follows: 1). Improving the Quality of Education: These findings show that effective strategies in improving literacy and numeracy skills can produce significant results. Therefore, the government can use this case as a good model or example to spread to other schools across the country. This can encourage the adoption of the best strategies and help improve the overall quality of education at the national

level; 2) Education Policy Development: Increasing the results of the national assessment from SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi can provide valuable input for the development of national education policies.

These findings can be used as a basis for formulating policies that support the use of effective learning strategies at all levels of education, from primary to tertiary; 3) Improvement of Educational Standards: The success of SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi in improving students' literacy and numeracy skills can spur efforts to improve overall educational standards. Governments can use these findings as an impetus to set higher standards for schools across the country and ensure that all students have access to quality education; 4) Increased Investment in Education: The success of schools in improving students' literacy and numeracy skills can be a strong argument for increasing investment in education. Governments may become more inclined to allocate more resources, be it in the form of funds, teacher training, or educational infrastructure, to support efforts to improve the quality of education across the country; 5) Increasing Public Trust in the Education System: The success of SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi can help build public trust in the education system. When schools succeed in improving students' abilities, it can increase parents' and general public's confidence in the value and effectiveness of formal education, which in turn can result in greater support for investment in education.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the national assessment at SD Negeri Baru 02 Pagi by implementing strategies that encourage proactive student involvement in the learning process has proven to be effective in improving literacy and numeracy skills, which are key elements in the National Assessment program. In addition, this approach has also increased student motivation and confidence, creating a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment. Increased student engagement and active participation not only supports their academic development, but also builds social and emotional skills that are essential for long-term success. The implementation of this strategy can be used as a model for other schools in an effort to improve the quality of education as a whole.

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